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21. There is an increasing possibility, however, that the 10 October registration date may be postponed, thus permitting further time for negotiations.

- A. Pathet Lao chief, Prince Souphanouvong, who last week refused to keep a 30 September date for a scheduled meeting near Sam Neua with Laotian premier Katay, now has agreed to meet with him in Burma on 9 October.
- B. The Indian ICC chairman states ICC will sit in and present its "outline of settlement" either before or during the meeting.
- C. He believes meeting will not last more than two days and he is not optimistic.

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II. There is an increasing possibility, however, that the 10 October registration date may be postponed, thus permitting further time for negotiations.

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- D. The Indians also believe the results of last month's Cambodian elections have convinced the Pathets that they should not risk a test of their strength at the polls.
- II. Many observers, including the Indians, believe the Communists are linking a political settlement in Laos to progress on a political settlement between North and South Vietnam.
- A. However, if negotiations break down (as is anticipated), the Pathet rebels may intensify military operations in the northern provinces.
- B. In event of an all-out Pathet attack, the Laotian government plans to launch a "vigorous" counteroffensive.

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in addition to the handicap of poor military leadership, it is probable that the French--who control the air-lift necessary for operations in the north--would withdraw their support in the event of heavy fighting.

Any substantial reinforcement of the 5,200 government troops presently stationed in the northern provinces might bring Viet Minh intervention on the side of the 6,300-man Pathet Lao force.

The Laotian Government wants Manila Pact signatories to take up the problem and to intervene on its behalf if the Viet Minh moves in support of the Pathets.

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interesting observations on the Pathets have been obtained through interrogation of the secretary of their negotiating team, who defected to Government last month.

- A. Defector claims conditions in north are bad and both civil and military Pathet officials would like to defect, but fear reprisals.
- B. He insists that the Pathets are willing to pay a high price in order to participate in December elections.
- C. However, Pathets' tough tactics seem to belie defector's view and it would be highly unorthodox Communist strategy to risk a secure territorial base for a dubious chance at the polls.

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- D. Another statement that seems doubtful is defector's assertion that Pathets are willing to see a large part of their army integrated with Royal forces and the rest demobilized, while saying at the same time that the Pathets are worried over their troops' reliability.